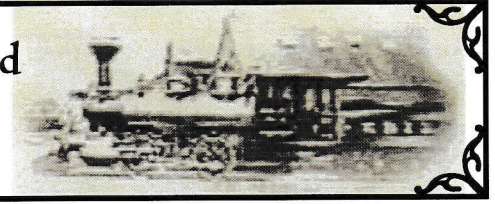


French Creek Valley Railroad  
Historical Society  
P.O. Box 632 Meadville, PA 16335



SPRING 2021

Newsletter of the French Creek Valley Railroad Historical Society

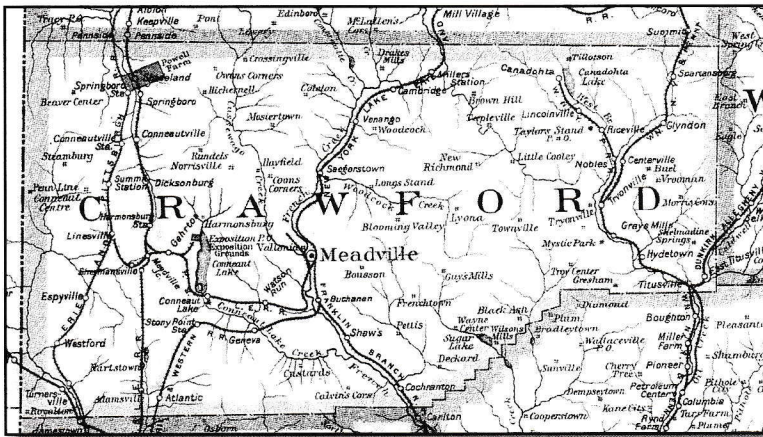
Volume 16 Number 1

# VALLEY EXPRESS

## History of the Meadville Railway - Part 1

by Carl Timko

There was enough interest to build another railroad in Crawford County, that a meeting convened at the Crawford County Court House in March of 1880. At the time the only rail lines available were the New York Pennsylvania & Ohio Railroad (whose ancestor, the Meadville Railroad is not the subject of this article), and the Erie & Pittsburgh Railroad. The NYP&O, having taken over the former Atlantic & Great Western, was struggling financially and the E&P was a ways west of Meadville; the closest town on the E&P being Linesville. The need was there to build another line, not just because of the reasons mentioned above, but goods needed to be shipped from and to Meadville, without having to rely solely on the NYP&O. Plus the competition would be good for the merchants in that shipping rates were likely to be more affordable.



Through the discussions, building a rail line out from Meadville to connect to another line raised enough interest to have a committee of fifteen members to be appointed to raise the necessary funds, with George W. Delamater as the chairman, and H. L. Richmond, the secretary. Mr. Delamater in later years would go on to be a politician, and ran for the Pennsylvania governor's seat in 1887, but lost. Mr. Richmond was a lawyer and had been a Pennsylvania State Representative between 1873 and 1875. This committee organized with the following appointments: James J. Shryock as president, F. W. Ellsworth as secretary, George W. Delamater as treasurer, and the directors were Samuel B. Dick, S. C. Stratton, Archibald S. Dickson, Cyrus Kitchen, Walter F. Harper, W. P. Porter, and Arthur C. Huidekoper.

Mr. Shryock was involved with many railroads during his lifetime. He helped form the Meadville Railroad (later to become the Atlantic & Great Western of Pennsylvania), the Bear Creek Railroad, the Shenango & Allegheny Railroad, the Pithole Railroad, the New Lisbon Railroad, the A&GW of New York, the A&GW after the lines in NY, PA, and OH were merged, and was co-owner of Gill and Shryock, a dry goods store in Meadville. Mr. Dick was a retired Civil War colonel that would go on to be a Pennsylvania state

(continued on page 5)

### Local News

Per a phone call from Carl Wassing of Corry Rails, a homecoming celebration for the class A Climax home from Alaska, is set for May 15. Members will be notified of the venue.

Representatives of the FCVRRHS are invited as are a host of other organizations and vendors. Organizations are invited to bring their wares to sell during this event. Tables will be provided at no cost.

The Class A c=Climax was built in 1902 for the Wild Goose Railroad, which was operated by the Wild Goose Mining and Trading Co. The A-313 worked with three other Class A's. It was later abandoned in the town of Ophir, Alaska. Charlie Reader found it and transported for the purpose of rebuilding it to be used on his "Curly Q" Railroad. It never was reassembled.

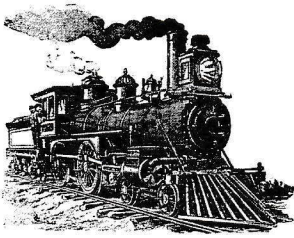
In the morning on the same day, Ploss Auctions of Corry will have a model railroad and railroad memorabilia auction. Starting time is thought to be about 10 a.m. and is to last for at least three hours, according to Mr. Wassing.

- Carl Wassing, Carl Timko

Being a member of several railroad and model railroad Facebook sites presents the temptation of using the content posted on these sites for this newsletter. However, they are all marked as a private or closed site and the content is open to members only. I can say there are interesting sightings regarding motive power on a local railroad. I can interest the reader in joining these sites and I will list them here.

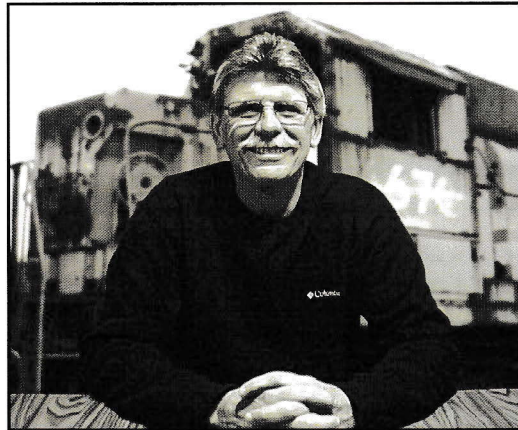
- Bessemer and Lake Erie Railroad (B&LE) Sightings Page
  - Norfolk Southern Meadville Line (Official Group)
  - The LA&L Family
  - Erie RR Modelers and Prototype Fans
  - The I-80 Group
  - The I-80 T-Trak Group
  - Northeast Ohio and Pennsylvania Railfans
  - Engineering Tragedy: The Ashtabula Train Disaster
  - Railroad Photos and Memories - Western NY and PA
  - Chessie System Complanter Division
  - Official Model Railroad Academy
- Check them out and enjoy.

- Carl Timko



## From the Stationmaster's Office

We hope everyone is safe and well. There seems to be some hope of normalcy in the near future with the distribution of the vaccines. We hope everyone can get their vaccination, which should enable us to all get back together again. When we do, it is advisable to still wear masks and maintain distances. That being said, we are progressing nicely with the interior of the depot. You can



read more about it and other interesting articles inside this issue. Thank you to all the members that have given their time and effort to renovate the depot. We are trying hard to get all the other interior work done so we can start laying the flooring. The flooring would be the last job in our Phase I agenda. Finishing the floors would enable us to set up to open the museum. We are all looking forward to that. The museum will have the main display area, a utility room, a kitchenette, a work shop, a library, a layout room and a storage area. One of our new members has proposed erecting a small building to house a blacksmith shop, which would demonstrate some of what Meadville's Erie Railroad shops did just down the rails from the depot.

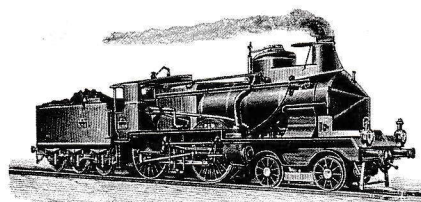
For now, we are having only board meetings every second Monday, instead of the usual membership meetings, in order to keep everyone safe. We look forward to the day when we can all gather again. Like the restoration of the depot, it isn't too far away. Stay safe and well!

*Bernie Hanmore*

### CONTRIBUTORS

- Drew Bailey
- Arden Hibbard
- Melissa Mencotti
- Palmiero Toyota
- Jack Sheets
- Elizabeth Williams
- Kiwanis Club of Meadville

There's lots more information as well as interesting photos and stories on our website!  
Check it out at [www.fcvrrhs.org](http://www.fcvrrhs.org)



## French Creek Valley Express

A Publication of the  
French Creek Valley Railroad  
Historical Society

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**French Creek Valley Express** is published Spring and Fall. Those wishing to submit material must do so no later than 30 days prior to publication, i.e. by April 1st or October 1st. All submissions are subject to editing for length and clarity. Queries must include full name, address, and daytime phone number or e-mail address.

#### Memberships:

\$20 individual; \$35 family;  
\$5 student under 18

The corporate Gold, Silver, and Bronze memberships and Lifetime memberships have been eliminated.

All members with lifetime memberships will not lose them.

### Budget / Finance / Insurance / Compliance

Some recently acquired items will be placed on the website "For Sale" page. One book has been placed on the site for sale, with many more titles coming soon. Books on the Alaska Railroad, the Atlantic Coast Line, railroads in New York state, and Union Pacific are just a few of what will be coming soon to the website ([www.fcrrhs.org](http://www.fcrrhs.org)).

- Carl Timko

### History & Archives

Cataloging the collection is continuing, but at a slower pace than expected. The pace is expected to pick up very soon. Carl Timko is working to catalog and inventory the collection using QR codes and a spreadsheet.

- Carl Timko

### Membership

The membership roll seems to be fairly steady despite losing board member Nick Ozorak due to his relocation.

Al Reibel has been named as a director in the February 2021 board meeting. Al has been a long-time member and has served as a director before.

We welcome our new members: David Boyd, Greg Boyd, Dorothy Waite, Otis Evans, Linda Sheets, John Spencer, and Mike Warren. Welcome aboard!

- Ed Cronin, Carl Timko



### Model Railroading

The Model Railroading Club has been on hiatus since the start of the pandemic. Students have been working on their own projects at home, with some virtual attendance with a mentor. Recent events will have caused the reduction in the number of mentors to one, Ed Cronin. Nick Ozorak is moving to Virginia and David Ellis is planning a move in the very near future. If anyone is available and would like to teach some students the art of model railroading, please contact a board member. Clearances may be required to accept a post as a mentor. Please contact a board member for more information.

- Dave Ellis, Carl Timko

MTH (Mike's Train House) Electric Trains will soon be closing. It is expected the model train manufacturer will close its doors in May. Preparations are already underway even though one last run of uncateloguued models are being produced. Already there have been auctions of artwork, samples, and archival inventory at MTH's Maryland warehouse by Cabin Fever Auctions. MTH has sold off HO and S scale tooling and molding to Scale Trains. Atlas Model Railroading has purchased select O scale tooling and molding. A list of the products can be found at [www.atlasrr.com](http://www.atlasrr.com).

-[www.atlasrr.com](http://www.atlasrr.com), Carl Timko

### Museum

#### Meadville Railroad Depot Progress.

We continue to move forward with the reconstruction of the Depot. As of March 10, 2021, we have been working exclusively on the south 100 feet of the building (Phase I).

All framing has been completed, all drywall installed, finished, primed and painted. All ceilings will be installed by the end of March. Restrooms are completed. The flooring has been ordered (Luxury Vinyl Plank) and will be installed by mid-April. That leaves wainscoting, window and door trim, baseboards and the kitchenette counter top, upper cabinets and a new kitchenette entrance door. That will wrap up Phase I.

Phase II deals with the north 50 feet of the building. In that portion of the building, the existing floors will be repaired, sanded, and sealed. Walls will be framed and wiring will be completed. Next the walls and ceiling will be insulated with open cell foam. Closed cell foam will be installed on the underside of the floor. Finally tongue and groove or shiplap boards will be installed over the insulation onto the roof rafters and wall framing.

We are considering installing one or two restrooms in the Phase II space. A new HVAC system will also be required for the Phase II space. At this time we estimate the cost of Phase II at \$50,000. If we can raise the required funds, we may be able to finish the interior of the entire building by Christmas of this year.

- Ed Cronin

(Editor's note: Having eyes that

*cannot deal with fluorescent lighting, the new LED light panels are wonderful. They can be dimmed and are not harsh, giving an even light. Kudos for choosing these lights!*

### Property and Equipment

The railroad equipment on display in Pomona Park in Meadville seems to be ready for a tourist season should the pandemic be minimized with the vaccination of nearly everyone. Should the display open up this summer, masks and social distancing will still be required.

-John Snyder

### Public Relations & Education

Carl Timko participated in Brian Miller's Allegheny College Public History virtual course on April 8. Carl explained the history and mission of the French Creek Valley Railroad Historical Society through a Zoom meeting to Mr. Miller's class. Dr. Miller, a professor at the college, hopes to educate his students on the history that is right in this community.

-Carl Timko

### Special Events & Programs

Due to the pandemic, there haven't been too many train shows to attend. It is hoped the CoVid-19 vaccines will be distributed quickly to facilitate the attending of train shows soon. In the meantime, there have been many virtual programs on the internet. Trainworld has been having several virtual showcases featuring many model railroad manufacturers. There will be at least one virtual NMRA convention this year. Check out the **Calendar of Events** on page 6.

- Carl Timko

### On The Side Track

#### Big News from Class I Railroading.

The Canadian Pacific Railway and the Kansas City Southern are to be merged pending approval by the Surface Transportation Board. Canadian Pacific Railway is purchasing the KCS for 25 billion dollars. The new entity is to be named Canadian Pacific Kansas City Railway. This transaction will connect Canada, the United States and Mexico in one rail network. It also reduces the number of Class I freight railroads to five. If approved,

## Depot Renovation Progress

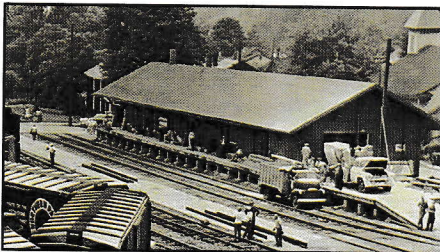
one wonders if Canadian National, Union Pacific, Norfolk Southern, CSX, and BNSF will consider a merger amongst themselves or any Class II or III railroads to compete with the new CPKC, should the STB approve the deal, which isn't expected until the middle of 2022. Other Class I railroad companies include Amtrak, VIA in Canada, and FEX in Mexico.

- [www.cpr.ca](http://www.cpr.ca) (Canadian Pacific Ry)

Canadian Pacific Railway also recently acquired the Central Maine & Quebec Railway in both the U.S. and Canada. The transaction was completed June 3, 2020. The Canadian Pacific now has access to Searsport, Maine and Port St. John, New Brunswick.

- [www.spr.ca](http://www.spr.ca) Candian Pacific Railway

While searching for contrasting photographs, the following photo of the depot presented itself. The date was June 19, 1962, the day the Erie Lackawanna had a train wreck in Meadville, as seen to the left. (This photo was cropped; not seen is the rest of the wreck in front of Millers Lumber Co.) Note that the elevator protrusion on the roof had not been added yet. This was still owned by Mr. Brock at that time. The elevator was likely added along with the Meadville Farm & Garden sign after the Mattocks Brothers bought the business.

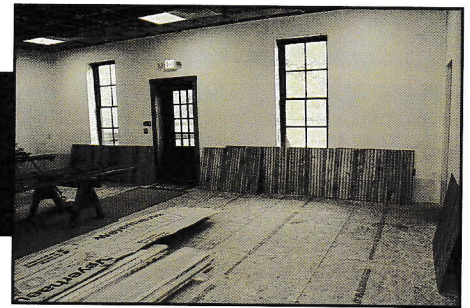


Photographs from Meadville Tribune, Crawford County Historical Society files.

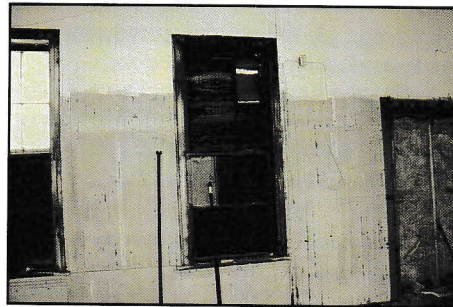
Also, the large door on the north side seems to be wider than it is now. A pickup truck seems to have engine trouble as the hood is up. A large stake bed truck is straddling the rails on the east side, either loading or unloading. There are houses behind the depot with St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church west of the depot on the right side. These structures were likely all removed during the early 1970s when Meadville started an urban renewal project that removed the Erie Railroad depot and installed the French Creek Parkway.



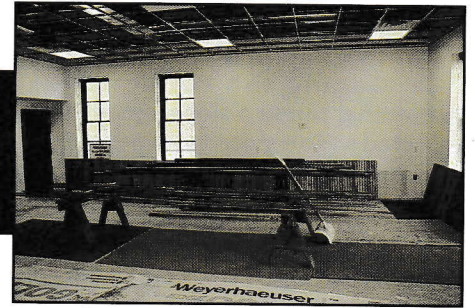
South and east side of Main Room  
April 4, 2019 - © FCVRRHS



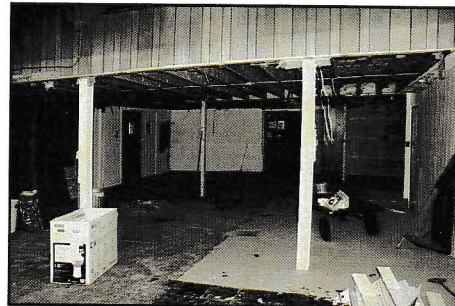
South wall in Main Room of Depot  
March 4, 2021 - © FCVRRHS



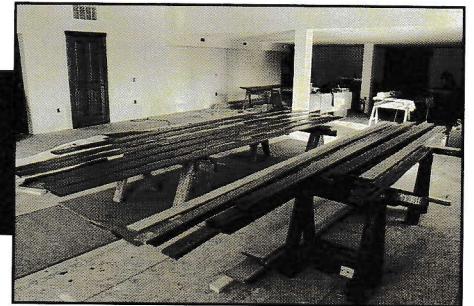
East wall of Main Room in Depot  
April 18, 2019 - © FCVRRHS



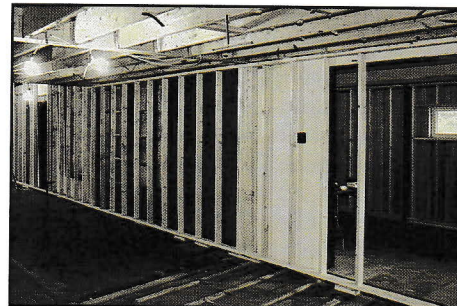
East wall in Main Room of Depot  
March 5, 2021 - © FCVRRHS



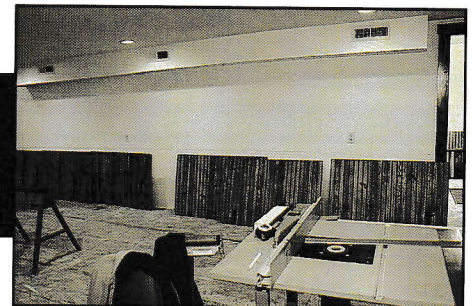
Looking north in the Main Room at Depot  
April 4, 2019 - © FCVRRHS



East and north sides in Main Room  
February 11, 2021 - © FCVRRHS



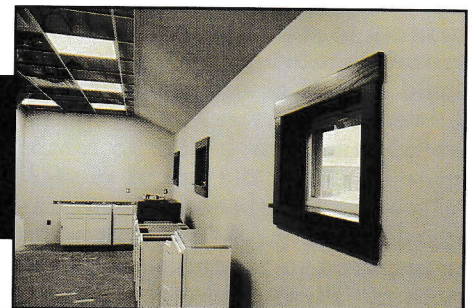
Main room west wall at the Depot  
August 5, 2019 - © FCVRRHS



West wall with wainscoting in Main Room  
March 4, 2021 - © FCVRRHS



Former entrance room to be the kitchenette  
July 18, 2019 - © FCVRRHS



Kitchenette with LED light panels  
January 12, 2021 - © FCVRRHS

## Meadville Railway History

(continued from page 1)

legislator, a contractor that with Mr. Huidekoper would complete the Pittsburgh Shenango & Lake Erie from Hartstown to Albion. Mr. Dick would also be the Pittsburgh Bessemer & Lake Erie Railroad president until 1900. Mr. Kitchen was the president of Meadville Savings Bank, and Mr. Harper would become the mayor of Meadville in 1882 and 1883. The board would select Mr. E. A. Doane, a civil engineer, to survey possible routes for the new railroad. After doing many surveys, he presented three possible routes. One was from Meadville to Stoneboro and connect with the New Castle & Franklin Railroad, which would end up being sold the next year and reorganized as the New Castle and Oil City Railroad. Another route was from Meadville, over the New York Pennsylvania & Ohio (the former A&GW), over the French Creek Canal towpath and to Evansburg (later to be renamed Conneaut Lake). A third route was from Meadville, along Conneaut Lake, through Evansville and into Linesville, connecting with the Erie & Pittsburgh Railroad, a Pennsylvania Railroad subsidiary that stretched from Girard Junction in Erie County to New Castle, with trackage rights over the Lake Shore and Michigan Southern (New York Central) to Erie. The latter route was the chosen route.

In establishing the Meadville Railway, capital stock was set at \$125,000. Subscriptions from Meadville area citizens and businesses raised \$88,000, while the Linesville and Evansburg area raised \$6,000 each. That left the board \$25,000 short of their goal without much hope of raising any more from the local citizens. As a last resort, the board negotiated with the E&P/ PRR to meet the shortfall. An agreement was settled on November 24, 1880, but with conditions. The Meadville Railway, once it was completed, was to be leased to the E&P. The E&P agreed that it would operate it at actual cost.

Construction began as soon as a charter was in hand. The estimated cost to build the railroad was \$250,000, but the actual cost ended up being \$312,000 due to the track being extended to the "center" of Meadville. That \$312,000 then would equate to \$7.7 million today. Seeing how the investors were serious in building the railroad, loans were obtained to finish building the rail line. Wood for the

bridge to cross French Creek (east of what is now or was Seco-Warwick) came from Harry McClure's sawmill. On October 3, 1881, the Meadville Railway opened for business. The first year of operation netted about \$28,000, as did the second year. Unfortunately, the Pennsy road operated the Meadville Railway at such a high operating ratio that the Railway never received enough and in turn defaulted on the loan. During the summer of 1883, the holders of the first mortgage were going to foreclose and sell the railroad, but stockholders tried to form a plan to raise money. This effort did not go well, so creditors tried to pool their money to acquire the railroad and informed all unsecured creditors of the chance to opt in. Only two gentlemen accepted the offer. There is a discrepancy about who bought the railroad. *The History of Crawford County - 1885* states that Arthur C. Huidekoper and George W. Delamater bought the railroad for \$150,000. An article from the January 10, 1884 edition of the *Greenville Argus* stated that Col. D. S. Richmond bought the railroad in the interest of a pool of junior creditors. According to this article, F.W. Huidekoper was the only other bidder.

But, according to the PA State Senate history website, Mr. Delamater owned the Meadville & Linesville and became its President. On February 12, 1884, the company was reorganized as the Meadville & Linesville Railway Company, and cancelled the lease with the Erie & Pittsburgh.

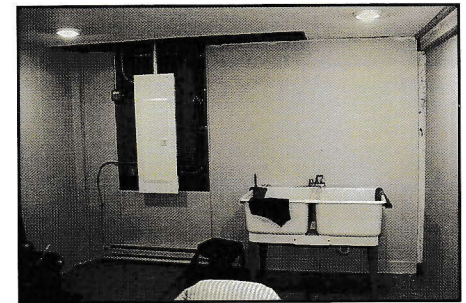
Next issue will review the structures, infrastructure and the likely situation with the rolling stock.

*(Editor's Note: Many thanks to Scott Woods, Ron Stafford, Dennis Mead, and the Pennsylvania Railroad Technical & Historical Society for information. References were*

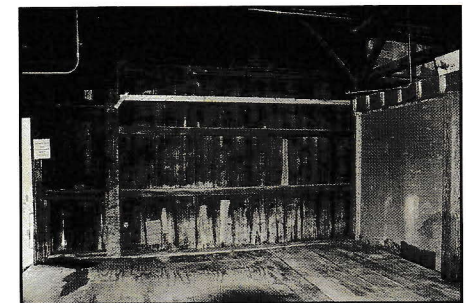
- PRR&HS website ([www.PRR&HS.org](http://www.PRR&HS.org))
- *Greenville Argus*
- *Conneautville Courier*
- [USgenealogyexpress.com](http://USgenealogyexpress.com)
- "History of Crawford County - 1885"
- "Pennsylvania Lines West - Erie & Pittsburgh Railroad" by Al Buchan
- Minutes of the Meadville Railway Co.
- Pennsylvania State Senate website ([www.legis.state.pa.us](http://www.legis.state.pa.us))



Grid work of lowered ceiling with LED light panels installed. Main room November 10, 2020 - ©FCVRRHS



Utility room, Meadville Railroad Depot February 11, 2021 - ©FCVRRHS



Area for the Workshop - August 15, 2019 © FCVRRHS



Library, Meadville Railroad Depot November 17, 2020 - © FCVRRHS



Sink, counter and cabinets for the kitchenette at the Depot- January 21, 2021 © FCVRRHS



French Creek Valley  
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P.O. Box 632  
Meadville, PA 16335



Erie RR S2 #518 at Pomona  
Park, Meadville © Carl Timko

French Creek Valley Railroad Historical Society  
Calendar of Events  
Spring 2021 to Fall 2021

**May 16 - New York Central System Historical Society**

50th Anniversary All-Scale Train Show  
Holiday Inn - Cleveland South  
6001 Rockside Road • Independence, OH  
Admission: Free! Hours: 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

**May 30 - June 5 - National Garden Railway Convention**

Gaylord/Opryland Resort & Convention Center, Nashville, TN  
Public train show - Friday and Saturday

**September 1 - 4 - National Narrow Gauge Conditions**

Hickory Metro Convention Center &  
Crowne Plaza Hotel, Hickory, NC

**Virtual Model Railroading**

**Trainworld** (on Facebook and YouTube)  
[www.TrainWorld.com](http://www.TrainWorld.com)

**YouTube** - search for topic [www.YouTube.com](http://www.YouTube.com)

**NMRax** - NMRA Virtual National Convention  
July 6-10 [www.pcnmra.org](http://www.pcnmra.org)  
Replacing cancelled in-person Rails By  
The Bay National Convention

**Model Railroad Academy**  
[www.modelrailroadacademy.com](http://www.modelrailroadacademy.com)

**Model Railroad Hobbyist Magazine**  
<https://model-railroad-hobbyist.com>

**Virtual Railfan** - <https://virtualrailfan.com/free>  
Website that has free webcams as well as  
member only access. Horseshoe Curve cam  
follows train around the Curve.

## Depot Renovation Progress



FCVRRHS Meadville Railroad Depot  
February 2018  
© FCVRRHS



FCVRRHS Meadville Railroad Depot  
March 5, 2020  
© FCVRRHS